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August 15, 2012

Iowa City Community School District Board of Education
1725 N. Dodge Street
Iowa City, IA 52245

Dear President Swesey and ICCSD Board Members,

As you discuss the Iowa City Community School District's future, the City Council appreciates your receptiveness to input from stakeholders throughout the district. On behalf of the council, I submit this letter to add to the dialogue and to communicate Iowa City's perspective on the issues at hand.

The council's recently-adopted strategic plan identifies protection of Iowa City's established neighborhoods among our highest priorities. Our goal is to ensure stability and balance throughout the city. To that end, we are investing significant capital resources to enhance aging parks, roads, utilities, and other public infrastructure and we are actively partnering with neighborhood groups to encourage private sector investment. These commitments recognize that the community's overall health is dependent upon a strong urban center.

The established neighborhoods of Iowa City are of critical importance to our downtown, our school district, the university, and many of the region's largest employers. Their vitality is directly proportionate to the upkeep and quality of school facilities. The city can upgrade parks, repave streets, and protect housing stock but if school buildings do not receive comparable attention, attracting families and reinvestment to the core of our community becomes difficult.

With respect to facilities planning, we encourage the board to recognize the investment that thousands of families have made in Iowa City, both in our established neighborhoods and on the east side where there is a significant and growing demand for housing. Equally maintaining facilities regardless of socioeconomic difference will help to ensure balance throughout the district.

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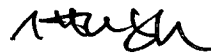
At the elementary school level, Iowa City has been impacted by a steady decline in facilities. Not one school feeding into City High has been constructed since 1969, only one new school has been constructed anywhere in Iowa City since 1993, the physical condition of many of our schools is inferior to the multiple new schools built outside of Iowa City during the same period of time, and Roosevelt is now closed. We recognize the Corridor is growing, but Iowa City's significantly larger population base has also shown robust growth (9% between 2000 and 2010 alone) and the majority of Johnson County's largest employers are located within our jurisdiction. As the largest population center in the district, Iowa City residents contribute a proportionately larger share of the property and sales taxes going to the district, yet, in recent years, only a fraction of the district's capital dollars has been invested in Iowa City schools.

At the high school level, capacity needs to be addressed. Given the immense cost of building and operating another comprehensive high school, all alternatives for expanding capacity – especially those that do not deprive existing facilities of much-needed attention – should be explored. In the meantime, we believe the significant enrollment imbalance between our two comprehensive high schools can be addressed.

We are mindful that the district and the city represent separate public entities with independent charges. However, our fates are linked: a school's impact on its neighborhood is arguably as significant as a neighborhood's impact on its school. The city and the district have worked together in the past (recent examples include the Grant Wood gymnasium, Mercer athletic facilities, fiber optic installations, and substantial park enhancements next to Horace Mann) and we must continue to work together in the future. We hope to expand our collaboration with the district to ensure equitable school facilities.

Thank you for your consideration and for your volunteer service to our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew J. Hayek', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Matthew J. Hayek, Mayor

cc: City Council